

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02627 011105Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4196

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2627

NODIS

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: LE PFOR PLO

SUBJ: FATAH REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH SENIOR USG OFFICIAL

1. MICHEL ABU JAWDEH, MANAGING EDITOR OF LOCAL BEIRUT NEWSPAPER AN NAHAR AND A LEADING BEIRUT COLUMNIST FOR MANY YEARS, CALLED ON ME MAY 31. HE SAID HE HAD THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK: A) IS USG READY FOR FIRST OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH FATAH, B) IF SO AT WHAT LEVEL, AND C) WHERE?

2. ABU JAWDEH WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY SENIOR OFFICIALS OF FATAH WHO HAD BEEN DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY RECENT STATEMENTS OF PRESIDENT CARTER REGARDING MIDDLE EAST. THEY FELT THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME USG UNDER PRESIDENT CARTER WAS MAKING A SINCERE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE MIDDLE EAST PEACE WHICH INCLUDED A JUST SOLUTION FOR PALESTINIANS. EIGHT-MAN AL FATAH COUNCIL HAD THEREFORE ASKED ABU JAWDEH TO APPROACH U.S. EMBASSY TO SEE IF USG WERE INTERESTED IN A DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH FATAH REPEAT FATAH REPRESENTATIVES.

3. ABU JAWDEH SAID FATAH WAS TIRED OF HAVING THEIR CASE PUT BY OTHER ARAB STATES OR USSR AND WANTED TO TALK DIRECTLY TO SENIOR USG OFFICIAL AS SOON AS

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SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02627 011105Z

POSSIBLE. HE STRESSED THAT THIS WAS NOT REPEAT NOT A PROPAGANDA PLOY BUT REPRESENTED AN HONEST EFFORT BY THE MOST SENIOR OFFICIALS IN FATAH (HE NAMED NO NAMES) TO OPEN A SERIOUS DIALOGUE WITH THE USG.. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF USG AGREED, AN INITIAL MEETING MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN TUNISIA BETWEEN A SENIOR FATAH REP AND A MEMBER OF THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. THIS WAS SIMPLY A

SUGGESTION; USG COULD OF COURSE CHOOSE REPRESENTATIVE AND PLACE IT PREFERRED. IF FIRST MEETING WERE SUCCESSFUL, OTHERS COULD BE ARRANGED AT A HIGHER LEVEL.

4. ABU JAWDEH STRESSED THAT FATAH WANTED SUCH MEETING TO TAKE PLACE IN COMPLETE SECRECY AND THAT ENTIRE SUBJECT WAS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE WITHIN PLO. ABU JAWDEH ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT HIS NAME SHOULD NOT BE USED IN ANY WAY OR IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS FOR HIM. ABU JAWDEH SAID THAT FATAH WAS THE KEY GROUP WITHIN THE PLO AND THAT IN ITS INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS IT WAS FAR MORE MODERATE THAN APPEARED PUBLICLY.

5. I REPLIED I WOULD PASS THIS REQUEST TO THE DEPT, ADDING THAT I WAS GOING ON LEAVE SOON AND THAT AMBASSADOR WAS RETURNING NEXT WEEK. ABU JAWDEH SAID HE MIGHT BE GOING TO SAUDI ARABIA NEXT WEEK AND WOULD HOPE TO HEAR USG REPLY FROM THE AMBASSADOR AFTER HIS RETURN.

6. COMMENT: I BELIEVE THIS IS A SERIOUS APPROACH. ABU JAWDEH IS A HIGHLY RESPECTED JOURNALIST WHO HAS LONG OCCUPIED A POSITION OF INFLUENCE IN THE ARAB WORLD. I DO NOT THINK HE WULD HAVE APPROACHED THE EMBASSY ON THIS SUBJECT UNLESS HE WERE CONVINCED THAT FATAH IS SINCERE AND THAT SUCH A DIALOGUE WILL BENEFIT THE CAUSE OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE.
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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